

Last night InterAction gave Congressmen Jesse L. Jackson, Jr., (D-IL) and Jim Kolbe (R-AZ) their Congressional Service Award for outstanding service in Congress for their work on international development and humanitarian issues. Each year InterAction honors two Members of Congress - a Democratic and a Republican - who have demonstrated extraordinary leadership in those two areas. Jackson and Kolbe were honored for their efforts around humanitarian crises, especially in the Sudan and other areas of Africa, particularly for efforts seeking increased funding for developmental and humanitarian assistance programs, HIV/AIDS and related issues.

Jackson said, "In the summer of 2003, Chairman Kolbe worked with me to address the humanitarian disaster in Liberia. Now more than two years later, Charles Taylor is in exile, Liberia has elected Africa's first woman president - Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf - and Liberia is hopefully on the right track to self-sufficiency. In the summer of 2004, the Chairman and I traveled to the Sudan to see first hand the devastation in the Darfur region. Last year, and earlier this year, we worked together to provide humanitarian and security assistance to that region, and hopefully our efforts will soon bear fruit.

"Extreme poverty claims 15,000 to 20,000 live every day. Most of those deaths are not caused by conflict, but by disease and malnutrition. We cannot always end conflicts, but we can treat disease and malnutrition.

"I pledge to continue the struggle to provide humanitarian and development assistance throughout the world."

Jackson concluded his remarks with warm regards for Chairman Kolbe who is leaving Congress next year. Jackson said, "Although I am honored to be receiving this award, I am saddened that Chairman Kolbe will be retiring at the end this Congress. Even though Chairman Kolbe and I don't agree on every issue we have found common ground on an issue that all of you here hold dear - international development and humanitarian assistance."

InterAction is the umbrella organization for all NGOs that are involved in international development and humanitarian causes. Last night's event was held at the Doubletree Hotel on Rhode Island Avenue in Washington, DC.